

Dear Senator Moore

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

I write to express my concern about the above bills. I understand that these bills will enable Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium support for midwives providing care for women to give birth in hospital.

Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. It is not acceptable however to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. By doing this Australia is totally out of step with nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand.

These nations support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose homebirth.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I believe this to be an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

My daughters were born at home 13 and 10 ½ years ago, respectively. These were choices made by us consciously and responsibly. They were the most amazing experiences for our families. What made these experiences so wonderful, was our choice of Independent Midwife and the level of care that she provided that went way beyond the call of duty. Being able to stay in the comfort of our own home at all times and not having to cause my eldest daughter any upheaval when my second daughter was born. At no time, was any financial burden placed upon the Government, or an already overloaded Health Care system by our choices to birth at home. There were no subsidies or incentives available to birth at home, therefore the full financial burden was our responsibility wholly and solely.

I would like to think that my daughters, when they choose to become parents, would also have homebirth as another option.

Women have the right to choose an elective caesarean, without judgement or retribution, so why not homebirth as a choice??

Yours sincerely

Leah Palmer-O'Malley